

Unsettlement

by
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I.

On the threshold of such a grand expedition to a new and untamed land, it seems prudent and dutiful to send such tidings as I possess to those kind and pious souls who have made possible my contribution to this great venture. I am ever thankful that the great and noble members of your parish have seen fit to procure the funds necessary to allow me to sail with my brethren to spread the light of divine truth to these new lands. Rest assured, dear friends and patrons, I stand with bowed head, fully aware of the honour done to me, and I vouchsafe that I will strive to ensure that you, whose kindness is the very tradewind that lifts me across the seas, will never have cause to doubt your choice. It is a rare thing for a young priest of humble prospects to make his own small contribution to the unfurling of history. Light is my heart and joyful are my contemplations when I reflect that our great nation will raise its banner on new shores, bringing truth and a new age of industry to the untamed expanses of God's earth that yet remain trapped and entangled in the morass of fallow ignorance. Happy indeed is the thought of all the good works yet to be done, and joyful is my soul like unto a parent rich in pride, as I look to the future, when we will raise our new Colony and foster it as limb and child of our own proud land, flesh of our own flesh. Young and inexperienced I may be, I know it well, and yet I am not unaware that there are great trials to be faced in the execution of this noble work. Is it not written 'Behold, happy the man whom God rebukes, therefore despise thou not the admonition of the Almighty'?

It has quickly become apparent that, to my shame, I am not well-fashioned for life aboard a ship, and I have spent most of the journey in a most distressed physical condition. Yet, in my berth, I have been given the gift of time to contemplate and reflect upon the oncoming task. Truly, I know that while I am no sea-going man, I am certain that the Lord hath given me the will to overcome such weaknesses of the flesh. I do confess, however, that I begin to ache to walk on God's own unmoving earth again. Lo! How much this unpleasant, sickening voyage has shewn to me how wise and bountiful the Divine Plan was to give us solid land for our mortal fallible feet.

As disturbed as my constitution has been by this rough sea voyage, I am most thankful that I have been spared the more strong afflictions that I have heard befell many of our number in our crossing. I know not the precise number of souls lost in our travels, but weak as I am, I have helped officiate at no less than seven makeshift and most inadequate services for those who were not blest to survive this journey. I am not aware of how our sister ships have fared, and whether they have suffered similar losses. So be it! I have no doubt

that this all falls within the Divine plan, and without difficulty to overcome, our strivings and triumphs in the name of the Lord and our great Nation would not be half so great. Yea, to bring the light of truth and civilisation is the highest purpose of all mankind, and you, my noble benefactors, have put me upon this ship from where I write, sailing day by day to a new and untamed shore, where we will build something reverent and lasting. I am humbled and thankful for this duty.

Great is the venture, and great the danger, yet for the glory of our Church and the name of our Nation, great shall be the rewards, I am sure of it. There is much to be done in this New Land - not only must we tame a wild and strange Terrafirma into order and submission, but so too must we contend with the Natives, whose ungodly nature we know not yet. In addition, there is always in our minds the thought that our Motherland is not the only nation that seeks to grow into these untilled lands. There is ever muttering that we may have to face rivals as we strive to put our due and proper mark upon the new land, a mark that keeps and protects the new land for the true God and our great Nation. Our rivals, perhaps, God protect us, our enemies, those corrupted vassals of their debauched Kingdom and false church, have the advantage of many more years of seizing new territories for themselves, blemishing these distant untamed lands with their base and false religion, and truthless, unseemly language. Yet, we do not fear! I am certain that we work to God's true plan and the nobility of our trials gives me faith that we will not flinch from any of these difficulties. We are duty-bound to overcome, lest our enemies are left to consume the earth in their sullied maw. We must strive to be the most perfect instruments of Heaven in earthly matters, and to abide by His plan, for it is written - 'He magnifieth the nations, and destroyeth them, he spreadeth the nations and draweth them back'.

When I have been well enough, I have tried to mix with the men as my powers permit me, being the youngest of our band of holy ministers and hence of the least dignity to object to parlaying with the common and rough men of our vessel. This is a more difficult enterprise than I had conceived, as some third of the men can converse only in such a slangish and accented distortion of our language that we can barely understand each other. In addition to this difficulty of mutual comprehension, few of the men evince any desire to converse with me. I have attempted to sift and assay their qualities - they are often of a stubborn and sullen disposition, and truly, I suspect that the vast number of the lower orders of our men do not grasp the importance of our holy work as the keepers of Divine Truth in this new and savage land. Yet, I remain hopeful that I will be equal

to the task of building a holy community of souls in the Colony, although thus far my meagre and untrained powers have found little success, as the few men who deign to converse with me speak only of a lust for riches from this enterprise. Well! All the sweeter will be our work when we shew them the true riches in the spreading of the Divine Word and the bright flag of our country!

It may perhaps be of some service to thou worthies at home who are the brace and support of our efforts with patience and prayer, to know what parts of our happenings can be conveyed in these humble missives. Know ye firstly, that I travel as the youngest and least of our Ministry, having the honour to learn at the feet of the Reverend Minister Eli and the Reverend Minister Hearthstone. As their names are already well-known for their wisdom and learnedness, I need not here repeat how righteous and pure these two gentlemen are. Verily, both men walk in the Grace of the Lord, and although Minister Hearthstone is grey, yet he is like an oak dusted with snow - tall and mighty in the service of God in his many years. As we have discussed, on our arrival at the New Colony, we are to be met by the men who preceded us in the preparatory expedition. These forerunners will have begun the construction of our new settlement, set in provisions for the arrival of our number upon our three ships, and have laid the rough foundations of this new outstretched limb of our Motherland.

I have no doubt that the huts and tabernacles built by this first party will be of a crude quality, but I have no fear of such a humble beginning. Nay, in fact I relish it! From this small start the first of our nation will have made to the New Colony, we will build something greater still, something that our country will feel pride in! A new and great extension of our own Motherland, one that will benefit from the wisdom and steadfastness of our own nation and will repay it with what that youthful shore hath to offer as a treasury of Heaven's gifts. The Reverend Ministers and I intend to adopt one of the humble dwellings formed by the first arrivals, and will work first to build the very much more important thing - that mass of believers without which any settlement is nothing more than a collection of wood and dirt, a thing without the light and hand of God. In time, when we have grown our congregation and propagated godly ideals first to the men who travel with us, and then to those of the more enlightened natives who might welcome the grace and order we bring them, we will then turn to make our church on a more permanent and worthy construction. I do not doubt that you will approve our scheme as not merely practical (for we are not ignorant of how great, alas! the cost will be to erect a more worthy house of worship), but as following the true and proper course for those who travel to this unfinished land as

emissaries of our Church and Nation.

Yea, from this new colony, we will reach out to touch the very corners of the earth, and I pray we will look forward to a new age of prosperity as the bounty of this land is laid forth, brought homewards upon eager craft! I know that there is order in the Universe, that nothing happens without it being writ in the great book of Heaven. How noble it will be to work in service of that Divine Plan, in bringing sense and harmony to the chaos of our new land!

Although we travel far from our Motherland, yet we feel it close in our hearts, and we will transplant that love into this new territory.

With all respect and regards, from your distant servant, one who labours in the Grace of the Lord and the Church of our Fathers.

J.

II.

Dear friends and supporters of our work, I am pleased to inform you that following a long and difficult journey, your humble servant's feet have at last touched down upon the young earth wherein our Colony will someday flourish into a worthy city and outpost! In truth, great was my joy to walk about in the open air, strange smelling as the air here might be. Yet, as ever in this imperfect world, not all here is as we would best wish it to be. Rather, our pleasure at finally bringing the ships into harbour is a pleasure mixed with confusion and ill. Our expedition has been dealt a blow even before we had tread upon the shore of our new land, for you will recall that a party was sent ahead of the great numbers of our colonists to prepare the way for our arrival, yet from the moment we came into harbour, word spread that there was no sign of the men who had been employed to lay the foundations and provisions for our arrival. Trusting not to rumour, which finds fertile ground in the minds and mouths of the rough men sailing to this land, I resolved to see with mine own eyes. The matter was far worse even than we feared, for when I walked about the territory where our new congregation was to be raised, it was evident that the necessary work had barely been begun. Most puzzlingly, of those men who were sent out before us, there is not the slightest trace. The disappearance of these men is disconcerting, but far more troublesome is that the building of our settlement must now begin from the very start, a work for which we were ill-prepared. As it is written - 'Man is born unto trouble, as sparks born from a flame fly upward'.

Sad to say, this had led to much squabbling amongst the men. We ministers have strained ourselves to assure all that this difficulty will not be impossible to overcome with devotion and labour, but it remains a most trying task to persuade the men to continue on this path. Despite this misfortune, I maintain the bright flame of hope, and believe that we will triumph over these vexations and tribulations. Even as I write these lines, the first work of constructing a new fort has begun - a shell to protect the seed of the new colony within, until it is strong enough to sprout and grow in this earth.

It may perhaps be of interest to you, my learned friends, to hear some first perceptions of the state and nature of the distant land where we now labour. The first and most constant fashion in which the land here differs (and indeed it is a difference most inescapable) is in the strange twinning of heat and moisture in the air. We must take care that we do not allow our constitutions, more habituated to the crisp and cooler lands of our Motherland, to be assailed by the local clime.

Wherever you may choose to walk, the air is hot and weighty, making it difficult to breathe, and the land has a tendency to become muddy and damp as you move from the shore towards the sprawling forests that surround our settlement. It is deep in these dripping, sweltering forests that the Natives are said to make their homes, although it is difficult to comprehend how even they could bear to live without the occasional refreshment of a coastal breeze to alleviate this damp heat. Many of the trees of the forest hang vast and spreading, and are of such varieties and species that we have never seen at home. The largest of them have sunk their roots into the sands and marsh for so long that they have something of the look of mouldy damp stone about their bark. Deep within the thick canopy, there is a great chattering of birds, and the few men who have ventured towards the forest have reported seeing not only some varieties of boar, but also most strange languid furred creatures that hang lazily on the trunks, and others that creep slowly along the forest floor, neither entirely like any form of creature yet seen in our own country. Beyond the forest lie vast mountain ranges that are even more difficult to traverse, although in this case, I am given to understand that this is all to the good, for it is somewhere far beyond these ranges that our enemies are said to have made their own claim to this Terrafirma.

It is my understanding that as the season continues, there is every chance of there being strong rains, albeit the heat lessens but little in these times. How marvellous the contradictions of this land are, and how very different from the climes of our own country! As evidence of the great forethought of Heaven, while the rains may become heavy in the wet season, it is to be presumed that these very rains give the land here a rich and dark fertility that will make for fine ploughing and farming when the colony has established such mechanisms and organisations necessary to convert the earth to produce and be fruitful beneath our hands. Indeed, there are signs of careless and unformed growth everywhere about this land - the trees loom and slouch, thick and dark green and heavy with local fruits.

Please accept my most sincere apologies, for although I have recorded my news in as timely fashion as possible, we have not yet had opportunity or means to send missives back to our Motherland, although I do not doubt we will soon encounter some sea traffic in our port that will agree to transmit these letters into your hands. I shall store them safely until such a time as they might reach you, so that you may be assured that my mind and soul is ever upon my mission and the debt of thanks owed to you all.

With all respect from your faithful servant in the Grace of the Lord
and the Church of our Fathers.

J.

III.

My friends,

I fear that matters are far worse than I had understood when I last wrote you word from our party here on the New Shore. As I had made mention, the proper preparation for our arrival was never completed by the men who went before us and are now missing - where we know not. This has led to much difficulty in erecting a new fort. In fact, so slowly goes the process of the construction of our new camp, and with such argument and laxness from the men, that it looks to be a work that will not soon be completed. Even more seriously, despite our most reasonable entreaties from your servants of the Ministry of Heaven, yet the men here are unwilling to take the time to construct some suitable small aedifice for our living and work. Certainly, we do not have any expectation that the building of a church proper should begin, but the men are wild and undisciplined and lack even the smallest amount of civility and respect (all matters that we will need to strain our utmost to correct, for such forms of behaviour would make a poor foundation for our glorious colony). The upshot remains that the men refuse to lift so much as a finger to help us and we lack the means ourselves to improve our situation, meaning that we are often forced to continue to abide in our cramped quarters on the ship. Being the youngest of our holy party, I have been appointed to live as best as I can upon the shore with the men in whatever rude protection I can muster against the heat and rain, acting as a sort of intermediary between my superiors on the ship and the men on shore, until such a time as we have sufficient shelter worthy of our revered Ministers.

As you can imagine, being confined still to the ship for much of the time is a great disappointment to my senior colleagues, who although they are too staunch to ever dream of uttering complaint, yet they find such cramped quarters most unsuitable for men of their age and standing. Yet, I retain the faith that once more of the fort is completed, we will be able to find some reasonable-minded men amongst the builders who will agree to construct for us a dwelling, that we may walk among the land where we work.

One even more serious consequence of the mysterious failure of the preparatory expedition is that an inventory of supplies remaining has revealed that the provisions that were to be stocked for our first year here have not been set in sufficiently, and in some cases, very vital supplies have not been put in at all. I do not fear our present circumstances, for strong is my faith in the guiding hand, and as it is said - 'At devastation and hunger thou shalt laugh, and of the beasts of the earth thou shalt not fear'. I have no doubt that we will find our

way to live, with prayer and the sweat of the brow, and I feel certain that such a fertile land as this will no doubt provide us with enough to make up the lamentable shortfall of provisions. While mayhap we will have the chance to trade with ships that sail into our new harbour, we must look to our own resources until such time as vessels begin to visit our young settlement. Far better, for the moment, to live upon what is at hand. It is because of our pressing need for a great number of goods that we must make contact and trade with the Natives here as soon as possible.

Praise God, in our difficulties, there is at least no sign that the soldiers of our enemies have made any movement in their own attempt to annex this land to their Kingdom, a sure sign that Heaven looks kindly upon us and stands by the company of the good and the true.

Your very loyal servant,

J.

IV.

My friends,

It gives me great strength in these testing times to think of all you at home and to know that your prayers are ever with us. I see now that I had but the slightest idea of the difficulties we would face here. Not only must we ever struggle with the land and the clime, so oppressive in its wet heat, and so very alien to our way of life, and with such a fertile ground for harrying sicknesses that never seem to abate amongst us, but there is equal difficulty in ministering to our first charges, the men we have brought with us. No doubt, the dearth of communication with the Motherland has unsettled the men greatly, as it has us all, yet I fear this is not the main wellspring of their poor behaviour. I am afraid I must inform you that despite our best efforts, the men are much given to violent and outrageous behaviour, indulging in most uncivilised and intemperate speech and deeds, casting a pall upon the name of our great land, being as they are even in their lowly character representatives of our country. Most galling is their vile language, met with when we Ministers entreat them and labour to give direction to their lives here on this sweltering soil. The men appear to be growing ever indifferent to the most simple and needful of civil behaviour, and have a most disgusting habit of swearing and blaspheming, with an intolerable and constant disdain for propriety. Verily, 'They are of those who revolt against the light, they do not regard its ways, and do not abide in its pathways'. I pray that we will drive this behaviour out of them, for a tongue that cannot speak in proper pious and respectful fashion is not meet to speak on behalf of our Nation and our God.

We continue to be short on provisions due to the disappearance of the preparatory party and their failure to do their duty. We have begun to experiment with the use of the local food, such as the Natives eat, a meagre and difficult diet of certain yams and plantains that grow in the forests. Much fruitless and violent debate has occurred between the captains of the expedition and the rabble about the proper way to proceed with the colony, since we are now so much behind what was planned and are so poorly provisioned. Minister Eli has had some parley with the captains, and has imparted to myself and the Minister Hearthstone that there is a belief that the previous expedition may have fled from cowardice and avarice, selling the provisions that would have supported us in the nearest port town for their own gain. This belief, however, they have taken care not to share with the common men here, who already are become such an undisciplined and selfish mass that they must not be allowed to consider emulating such disastrous and ignoble behaviour. Instead, the captains have

given it be understood that the last expedition was likely driven from the site of the colony by our enemy's desire to have this land for their own unholy Kingdom.

Despite these difficulties, I am most gratified to report to you all that we have at last made contact with the Natives. It may perchance be of some interest to you resident in the Motherland to know something of the nature and character of the people of this distant isle, and indeed, their likelihood to be vessels for the light of knowledge and divine truth that we humble ministers bring to this shore. Like many of you, I have heard stories of the savagery of the uncivilised world, and yet despite our anxieties, the Natives have shewn not the slightest hostility to our presence and work. In truth, the Natives are so far from expressing violence towards us, and are much more of a character that verges close upon the indifferent. This indolence appears to be much of a piece with the airs in this place, and it surprises me not at all that their natures should have grown to match the sluggish and slothful land they live in. The Natives are so habituated to their modes of improper lethargy that they have never made the meanest effort to properly till and farm this land, preferring to permit it to grow wild and uncontrolled - for they are as they who say 'Instead of wheat, let thorns grow forth, and instead of barley, weeds'. Indeed, to the best of my knowledge, the Natives grow not a single thing more than that which they eat, and like creatures of the wild, they seem to have no ambition to better the land or themselves, or to lay up stores for surplus and trade. They are content to eat the same simple meals of yams and plantains, and spend some small amount of time hunting, but far more time sheltering from the heat and rains in their rude huts in hammocks. Indeed, as I have observed, the sole work they seem to shew the slightest devotion to is their daily habit of going several times to the river's edge and washing themselves. This action they perform two or three times daily, although none of us can determine what drives them to this act. Minister Hearthstone has suggested that it is perhaps some primitive worship of the River-Devil he believes to be at the heart of their pagan religion.

One great difficulty that has arisen is that we have no way of clearly conversing with the Natives. We know very little of their language, and indeed, Minister Eli is most enthusiastic to make a study of it, being a scholar most fascinated with the broken pieces of language that spread across the earth from the time of Babel onward. Nor do the Natives appear to understand any of our tongue, and more vexingly, they appear to have little facility for learning to understand us. As you might imagine, our attempts to converse with them are for

the most part conducted in a sort of mime of gestures and nodding of heads. The Natives nod back, unperturbed by our attempts to communicate the coming threat of the army from the Kingdom that wishes to seize this land and enslave them in their false church. We do believe, however, that the Natives have comprehended and approved our desire to complete our fort in its current location, although as ever our presence here and our construction of the new state does not seem to be a matter that much troubles their temperaments. I am deeply hopeful that Minister Eli will make progress with the guttural tongue of these sluggish Natives, that we may begin the work of bringing to them the gifts of our Church, civilisation, and country through our teachings.

Indeed, it must now be owned that imparting wisdom and the building of our congregation among our fellow passengers is proving to be a most difficult task. The men become more and more blasphemous and undisciplined, and, stirred by the difficult conditions in which we live and the sweltering and unwholesome effect of the climate, they become lower and baser by the day and devote much of their time to indulgence and violence. The eyes of Heaven are ever upon us, and I am certain that our difficulties in pursuing the noble enterprise of this colony arise from the shameful and sometimes even godless behaviour of our men. It is imperative that they turn to the forgiveness of God, lest Heaven should visit further just punishments on our feeble souls. Truly, it may be said of our erring men that 'They grope in the darkness, and without light he maketh them wander as a drunkard'. I confess that, having exhausted many paths and attempts to the utmost of my power, I am now uncertain about how best to guide our wayward flock, although the revered Minister Hearthstone gives me great encouragement to persist.

To the end of improving the morals of our men so that Heaven may turn a more kindly eye to our community and spare us the punishment of the sickness that continues to increase our daily tribulations, on Minister Hearthstone's invention we have decided to hold a day of prayer and contrition. We may not yet have even the merest first brick of a church, nor even a stick of a proper domicile for we Ministers of the Lord to live within, yet, we will strive to corral as many of these wild settlers of ours as we can for a day of fast and prayer by our sheer moral authority. As a parent must be firm with an unruly child for its own benefit, so too must we drive the reluctant men together before us in our Day of Contrition.

Your servant,

J.

V.

I write the most lamentable news - the aged and reverend Minister Eli has gone on into the arms of the Lord. The illness inflicted upon us by the unknowable will of Heaven has not abated in the torrid and damp climate of this land, but rather has slowly grown and spread, creeping through our numbers until barely a one of us has not been entangled and stained by some touch of this plague. Our cleanest water is some miles hence from our suffering settlement, and due to the great inconvenience of transporting it, we have difficulty in even conveying sufficient pure water for the afflicted. Fever and weakness is found everywhere amongst us, and the unadorned graveyard of the burial area grows apace with the rest of our settlement. I can only think that it is for the best that Minister Eli has gone to his rest. This is the grace of Heaven, that such a noble soul as that of the Minister should be spared the poisonous sight of the colony collapsing before it has even begun, and the ruin brought about by the wretched and godless behaviour of those colonists who ought to be building for glory, but instead squander their time in fights and greedy quarrels, in cowardice and screaming plots.

Our supplies are growing perilously low. We have a modicum of food - not enough to live with comfort or to properly sustain us, but the Natives, who seem to face our poor ragged colony with something like bemused pity, have traded some of their wretched small supply of yams and plantains to us. I find it harder to be thankful for this food - by Heaven I have become sick of the sticky tasteless pap of those yams and plantains. Our enforced diet of these indigestible materials has begun to give me sharp pains in my innards. Over the last few nights, I have found myself dreaming of the simple delight of a well-cooked humble stew of the sort popular in our homeland, only to be awoken in the night by the pangs of the stomach.

With food becoming more scarce, the men continue to become more wild and feckless. The only area in which they take any labours are in fighting, blaspheming, and drunken riots. Indeed, it is a wonder to me that these shiftless, thankless rogues we have transported across the seas, those who I begin to suspect are the very lowest and most base of our nation, have such a facility for producing liquor to addle their violent and wretched wits. We have barely enough to eat, yet somehow our men manage to find or brew enough of the demon drink to hasten their descent and the disintegration of the strained moral fibre of the colony.

The greatest practical difficulty we now face is that we will run out of medicines and such needful supplies long before we begin to truly feel

the constricting pain of starvation. Those most terribly struck by the illness lie writhing and sweating in agony in our rotting makeshift huts, and there is no hope for them now but to pray to the grace of Heaven. Indeed, I am thankful that the Lord shewed such mercy to the venerable Minister Eli as to allow him to pass on to his heavenly reward swiftly and with little pain.

We now know that we cannot hold much hope for assistance from passing ships. For some time, we have wondered at the lack of sea-vessels with whom we might trade, or at least send word for assistance back to the Motherland. We have lived at the mouth of the harbour for not a few months now, and in one of the small beneficial results of the sinful rebellion of the men, we at last now have some understanding of why no ships have come into shelter and why we have thus had no good opportunity to trade and replenish our sorely diminished supplies. A group of malcontents who had long ago thrown down their tools, and constituted some of the worst of the rabble, out of selfish fear of the spreading and unending illness and full of petty loathing for the difficult life they were condemned to here in the colony, resolved themselves to mutiny and commandeer a vessel to attempt to sail to some port more conducive to their unnatural appetites and impure characters. But, how God doth punish the wicked and unravel their schemes! - their stolen craft faltered in the strange winds of the harbour, and was wrecked upon some rocks, drowning every last one of the mutineers. As one of the commanders of the expedition has now determined, our benighted harbour has the unusual property of offering shelter for ships that enter, but being so arranged that winds to carry a ship out again blow only seldom here. Even then, the erratic winds are not to be trusted to carry a craft safely out to harbour, as this wreck has clearly shewn. No sea-goers would risk being trapped in our harbour, and hence do not dare to pull into port. For now our colony is alone and entrapped, and we have no means of sending word to the Motherland for the assistance we so desperately need. I know not even when I will have an opportunity to send these notes to you all. I keep them safe, hopeful in my faith that Heaven will permit me to send them to you, and if that is not to be, that they will serve as a small record of what has transpired here in our sufferings and the undermining of the colony.

I have heard about the camp that there are murmurs and half-translated rumours from the Natives, that our enemies, the base men of the Kingdom, have been spotted by scouts on the far edge of the forest. There is everywhere conjecture that the enemy intend to attack and remove us from our tentative hold on this land, so that they may occupy it all themselves, bending the Natives to their own will and

exploiting the earth here for their Kingdom's own benefit. As you know the pernicious force of rumour, friends, which flies quicker than truth, this report has been much whispered about our colony, and many of the men, weak of character and purpose, are whipped up into a frenzy of panic and fear. We made attempt to scout the forest, but we know so little of the area and the drooping forest is difficult to navigate, as it grows with such unnatural incomprehensible spreading, and it is almost impossible to keep a clear and direct path through the trees. All our scouting parties have thus far become dangerously lost, and had a most difficult time in returning to our tottering fort. Indeed, the trees are fearful to me, and I can almost imagine them worming closer towards me in the night, waiting to reach over us.

It is difficult to hope for our future days, for it is as if 'Terrors turn upon me, they pursue my soul as the wind, and my deliverance passes away as a cloud'.

J.

VI.

I do not comprehend it. The air everywhere here strangles me. All is unmoving and dark green here. The wet ground, the strangling undergrowth, the endlessly spreading canopy of the sagging forest, the very hair and skin of the natives. I confess I begin to fear that my flesh is becoming a slow muddy green-brown too, from lack of movement. The air is close and thick and noisome, yet the Natives die not. I do not know what is happening around me, or even if it is possible to understand this place. Oh, yea, My days have passed, my counsels are torn asunder, and the possessions of my heart. We have proved unworthy to bring order to this place, and I see that we have failed to even bring order and piety to our own. I begin to fear that we have misunderstood Heaven's purpose entirely. We will not tame this land. Without the slightest care, it will overcome us all instead. Our corpses will be swallowed by the mud and the forest, our puny little ramshackle fort will collapse into nothing, and when next an expedition comes to these shores, there will be no sign that we ever landed here.

There are reports that the invaders who came to this land to seize it for themselves have taken control of our water source, forcing us to dig wells in the fort. We are drinking nothing but foul water here, and our food is spoiled and repugnant. There is no question of using arms to defend ourselves, for too many of our number are weak and afflicted by the illness. We would attempt to find the invaders and parley with them, but we are most hampered in our efforts by the fear that keeps us all clinging to the fort and the ships on the shore. Even if we could find the invaders, we do not have the strength to resist them, and parley would be impossible, for not a one of us speaks their language.

I begin to hope that the invaders will drive us all into the sea, that we may be purified. Do I too deserve this? I do not feel entirely well myself - The night pierces my bones, and the gnawing pains do not stop, as it says. The more I think on the corpses felled by the disease and those half-dead who lie without medicines in torment, the more I am convinced that our failures and suffering are not the fault of this sluggish land. We brought the disease, the flaw, the sin with us here on our own ships, we brought the worst of us, the impure and the blasphemous, and it is written - Who can make a pure thing from a thing unclean? No one. Now the cruel discipline of Heaven is giving us the death and punishment that we deserve. That we must deserve. To think otherwise, is to say our failures and agonies are as nothing more than chaos without meaning. There must be a reason for all of this, though I cannot see it. I cannot think clearly, but I pray that

there must. I no longer feel any strength in my veins. Yea, I have proclaimed to the pit - you are my father, to the maggot - you are my mother and sister.

I am too hot. My garments choke me with foulness and dig into my skin.

He hath cast me into the mud, and I have become as dirt and ashes.

I cannot comprehend. I do not wish to write any more. I think I will go sit in the mud by the river where the Natives wash and pray that I too will be washed clean away.